



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

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NOAA Seeks Comments on a Proposed Rule to Extend Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Recreational Sector Separation Provisions *Comment Period Ends October 24, 2016*

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on a proposed rule that would extend the 2017 sunset provision by five years for the recreational red snapper sector separation regulations.

These measures are outlined in Amendment 45 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico submitted by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council). The proposed rule published in the *Federal Register* on September 8, 2016, with the comment period ending October 24, 2016.

History of the sector separation provisions

The sector separation provisions were implemented in May 2015 through the final rule for Amendment 40. Amendment 40 specified sub-quotas, annual catch targets, and accountability measures for the federal for-hire and private angling components of the recreational sector. The purpose of this amendment was to increase flexibility in future management of the recreational sector fishing for red snapper and reduce the chance for recreational quota overruns. For more information on Amendment 40, see http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/am40/index.html.

The final rule for Amendment 40 also put in place a three-year sunset provision for sector separation. Unless modified, the sector separation measures expire after December 31, 2017, which means the recreational sector would be managed as a single entity again.

The Council is currently working to develop and approve actions to address the management of charter vessel and headboat fishing within the federal for-hire component. If approved by NOAA, these actions likely would not be effective until after the sector separation provisions expire at the end of 2017. Therefore, the Council determined there was a need to extend the sunset provision for an additional five years past the original sunset date.

Proposed Management Measures

The rule would extend the sunset provision from the end of the 2017 fishing year (December 31, 2017) to the end of the 2022 fishing year (December 31, 2022).

How to Submit Comments

NOAA Fisheries must receive comments on this proposed rule no later than October 24, 2016. We will address all comments specifically directed to Amendment 45 or the proposed rule in the final rule.* NOAA Fisheries encourages constituents to access the proposed rule and Amendment 45 for more complete information at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2016/am45/index.html or the e-Rulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov.

You may submit comments on the proposed rule, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2016-0089, by any of the following methods:

Electronic Submission: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2016-0089>, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

Mail: Submit written comments to Peter Hood, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

Instructions: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NOAA Fisheries. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NOAA Fisheries will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

*Note that if your comments on Amendment 45 and the proposed rule are the same, you only need to submit one set of comments.